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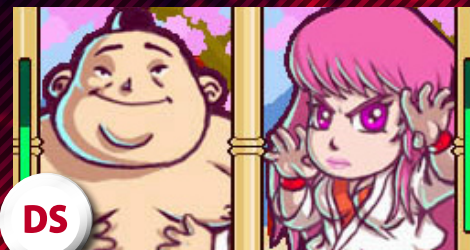
Issue 4 | June 2007

HGZine

Free Magazine For Handheld Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...

THE
10 BEST
GAMES YOU'VE
NEVER
PLAYED!

FULL REVIEWS!



DS

Zendoku

When puzzle games attack



PSP

Burnout: Dominator

Let's go for a spin...



PSP

Champ Manager 2007

Can you manage?

PLUS!

The latest mobile
games revealed
and rated



EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

WipEout Pulse

The development team tells all

THEY'RE BACK!

Worms: Open Warfare 2

Hands-on with
the explosive
invertebrate
battle-'em-up



SOCOM

The U.S. Navy SEALs strike again

MGS: Portable Ops

Miniature Metal Gear mayhem



Welcome to HGZine

It's a massive month for PSP with Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops, Burnout Dominator and SOCOM US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo 2 (the catchiest title ever?) making a simultaneous bid for our attention. If you're still not convinced that Sony's handheld is enjoying a renaissance, check out WipEout Pulse – we've spoken to the development team and unearthed some fascinating info. As for DS, Diner Dash and Zendoku are cute, and there's another Final Fantasy spin-off – but for really big releases, we have our eyes on Pokémon and Zelda...

Anyway, this is my last issue as editor. I've thoroughly enjoyed launching the magazine and from next month you'll be in the capable hands of Richard Melville. Goodbye for now.

Keith Stuart, Editor
HGZine@gamerzines.com

READER FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of the new issue!

MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best games writers

Ed Fear

Could only manage one review this month. Lazy.
GAME OF THE MOMENT: FF Fables: Chocobo Tales

Dave McCarthy

Another newcomer. Ex-Edge magazine. Again!
GAME OF THE MOMENT: Burnout Dominator

Steve O'Rourke

Met the creator of Harvest Moon and had a chat.
GAME OF THE MOMENT: Hotel Dusk: Room 215

Chris Schilling

Cult games expert. If you know it, he ain't playing it.
GAME OF THE MOMENT: Slitherlink (DS)

Mark Walbank

This month Mark's a master of stealth. And tennis.
GAME OF THE MOMENT: MGS: Portable Ops

Simon Parkin

Liked pretending to be a waitress in Diner Dash.
GAME OF THE MOMENT: Picross (DS)

Keith Stuart

Did lots of writing as well as editing. So, so tired.
GAME OF THE MOMENT: Panzer Tactics on mobile

Ian Morris

Went and caught Worms for us. Sorry about that.
GAME OF THE MOMENT: Doku: Let's Gakkou! (DS)

DON'T MISS!
This month's highlights

WipEout Pulse

THE BIG PREVIEW Now with gut-churning loops! PAGE 12

Worms return

It's Open Warfare 2 P14

DS

Chocobo Tales

Another great spin-off... P33

Ten Games You've Never Played

Broaden your horizons P22

SOCOM

Shoot to thrill P25

Harvest Moon

The Interview! P20

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

SONY PSP

Silent Hill Origins
WipEout Pulse
Worms Open Warfare 2
Smash Court Tennis 3
SBK 07 World Superbike Championship
World Poker Championship 2
SOCOM US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo 2
MGS: Portable Ops
Championship Manager 2007
Burnout Dominator
PSP News Roundup

NINTENDO DS

Brothers in Arms DS
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle
Zendoku
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales
Diner Dash
MOBILE PHONE
News
Reviews



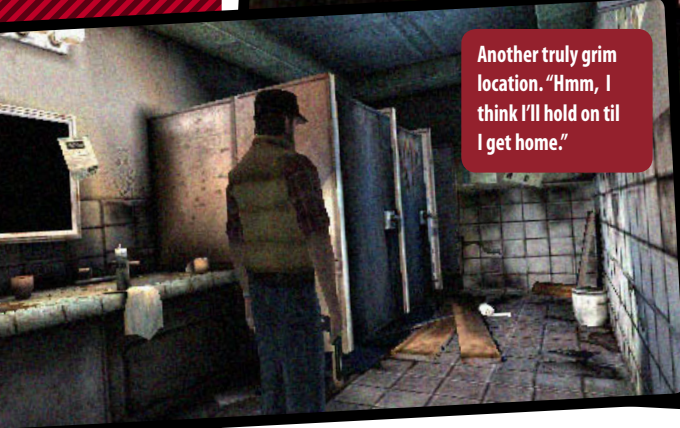
PSP

SILENT HILL
ORIGINS

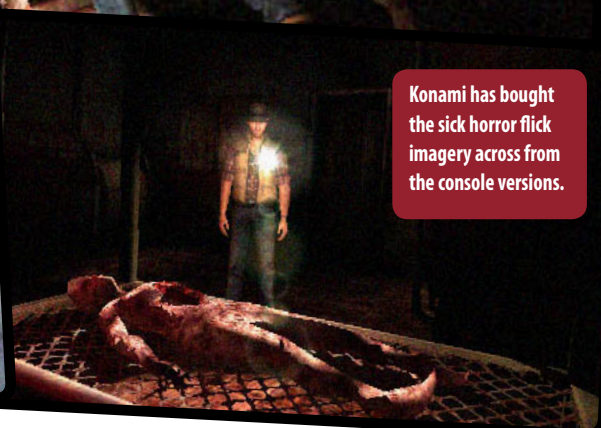
The game allows you to grab objects and attack enemies with different strikes.

"It's just one searing psychological hammer blow after another!"

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Climax Studios
Heritage: Ghost Rider, Diner Dash, Who Wants to be a Millionaire
Link: www.konami-europe.com/games
ETA: Autumn



Another truly grim location. "Hmm, I think I'll hold on til I get home."



Konami has bought the sick horror flick imagery across from the console versions.



Truck driver Travis Grady must slowly confront a secret from his past.



INTERACTIVE CONTENT
Click here for horror. Dare you?



Silent Hill Origins

The secrets behind the Hill to be revealed

LATEST NEWS

What's the story?

Konami has released new screens and two spooky trailers for its latest Silent Hill horror show – the first to arrive on handheld. Be afraid.

What do we know?

This time the surreal terror revolves around lonesome truck driver Travis Grady who makes an unfortunate stop in Silent Hill and discovers – yes – something is not quite right about the town and its inhabitants. While attempting to escape, Grady must confront his own repressed memories of a scarred and scary childhood. It's just one searing psychological hammer blow after another, then. Business as usual for this series.

The game promises to take us back to the origins of the Silent Hill story – just why has a small rural town become a maelstrom of supernatural insanity? Did it all start when they closed the local Post office? Apparently, the game introduces a few new control mechanisms to suit the PSP set-up. A "cineractive" system provides the player with a different set of controls for specific monster encounters – handily getting around the lack of buttons. Also, players will be able to shift scenic elements around, thereby blocking doors against rampaging monsters. It's a nice idea – Silent Hill has always been about nightmares, about running away from unseen and unknowable phantoms – barricades are a typically symbolic touch.

The visual style will certainly be familiar to experienced Silent Hill tourists. The grainy patina makes it all look like an eighties video nasty running on a knackered VCR, while the shop window dummy enemies and dismembered bodies are par for the course. Well-known characters will also be returning, and there are multiple endings to discover...

When do we get more?

Our feverish fingers are desperate for a playable demo. We shall dress up as Pyramid Head and hang around outside Konami HQ until we're sated.

Anything else to declare?

The chilling music will once again be provided by series composer Akira Yamaoka, who has performed his soundtracks live at several game events.

DS

The contextual duck and cover mechanics are assigned to one button, simplifying the set-up for portable play.

"Bazookas, sniper rifles, machine guns and grenades"

The familiar fire and flank tactics are present and correct. Or you can just bomb in on jeeps.

The binoculars icon suggests there will be levels requiring plenty of quiet scouting and sneaky infiltration.

Soldiers on your team can be commanded to lay down suppressing fire by simply touching the symbol above an enemy with the stylus.

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Gearbox
Heritage: Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30 (PS2/Xbox), Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood (PS2)
Link: www.gearboxsoftware.com
ETA: Summer

You'll be able to get in the back of a jeep and fire from a gun turret via the stylus and touchscreen.

Brothers in Arms DS

Yet more soldiers in dire straits

LATEST NEWS

What's the story?

Ubisoft has just announced that its excellent Brothers in Arms franchise is coming to the DS (the first time on a Nintendo console) and will support touch-screen controls and entirely new multiplayer modes.

What do we know?

There aren't any decent FPS war games on the DS so we can't wait to see how Gearbox's superb WWII tactical shooter adapts to the format. The series is known for its gritty realism and fire and flank tactics and Gearbox president, Randy Pitchford, believes the DS is the perfect system to take advantage of these features. "Brothers in Arms really lends itself to the DS interface," he assures us. "Imagine aiming with the DS stylus from a covered position – that's what you can look forward to with Brothers in Arms DS."

Weapons include machine guns, bazookas, sniper rifles and grenades and contextual movement will see players ducking for cover behind nearby objects. While squad tactics and commands will feature, the game's AI takes care of all the fiddly business such as healing team mates. Through 16 epic missions covering North Africa, Normandy and the rolling hills of Ardennes this DS iteration also brings something fresh to the recipe by allowing players to commandeer vehicles such as a Sherman tank and a nippy recon car.

If that's not enough Gearbox also say it's giving considerable focus to the multiplayer arena with four-player Deathmatch and Team Deathmatch catered for over Nintendo's DS Wi-Fi infrastructure.

When do we get more?

With the game due out this summer we fully expect playable code to be available in the next two months. We'll keep you updated of course, once we get our eager hands on the cart.

Anything else to declare?

While offering some great tactical shooting and multiplayer features Brothers in Arms D-Day on PSP suffered from grainy visuals and poorly mapped controls. We'll certainly be hoping these issues are addressed for the new DS version. The screenshots suggest Gearbox has it all under control...

DS



Publisher: Koei

Developer: Koei

Heritage: The Dynasty Warriors series, Samurai Warriors, Kessen

Link: www.koei.com

ETA: Autumn 2007

Your Battle Deck can be improved as you unlock new cards.



Beaten foe drop coins which are used to buy power-ups.



Combat tends to be against small groups rather than armies.



Select Stage

"A much more intimate and intellectual fighting experience"



Ancient China is split into a series of areas for you to conquer.



The map screen shows your progress through the game world. Each stop is a new battle.

Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle

Card battling take on the strategy classic

LATEST NEWS

What's the story?

The epic tactical battlefield adventure returns in an entirely new DS incarnation. And like Metal Gear Acid this console favourite comes to handheld as a card fighter.

What do we know?

Once again we're back in Ancient China where rebel gangs and rival factions are ripping the kingdom apart. Players select from one of three characters each with their own specific skills – the Phoenix boasts balance, the Dragon has speed while the Chimera goes for raw power. Out of your Battle Deck of cards, you then select seven officers from the original Dynasty Warriors to do your combat bidding and defend your bases. There's also a new 'Roulette Obstacle System' which provides a range of spells and special tactics via the relevant cards. The idea is to progress through the game world, engaging in stats-based battles with groups of foe and overcoming their strongholds before they take yours. New cards can be collected en route, some of which provide power-ups for your officers. It's a simplified system of course, removing the huge battles and multiple warriors of the console titles for a much more intimate and intellectual fighting experience. The visuals, too, represent a change of direction, opting for anime stylisation over lush realism.

When do we get more?

The game is already out in Japan, but English language versions aren't due until the summer. Hopefully, preview code will be available before then.

Anything else to declare?

There's a three-player mode where combatants fight to take each other's bases, conceding battle cards if they lose.



TAKE TO THE STREETS OF NEW YORK AND BECOME THE ULTIMATE GODFATHER OF STREET RACING!

WHO'S THE DADDY?

DRIVER 76

OUT 11TH MAY

PLAY ALONG TO AN AUTHENTIC 1970'S SOUNDTRACK

<http://driver.ubi.com>

Exclusive to PSP

Developed by SUMO

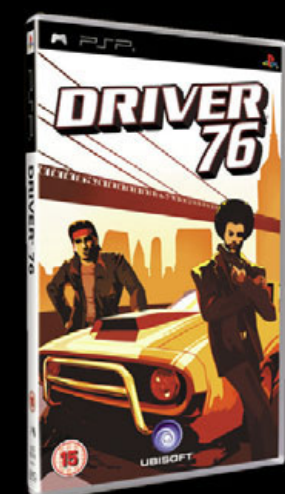
UBISOFT

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REPLAY THIS VIDEO



PSP

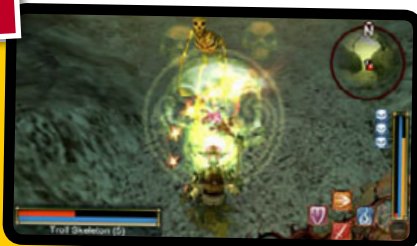
Incoming

Coming soon to your handheld

Silverfall

Publisher: Take Two | ETA: June

Set in the fantasy world of Nelwë, this action RPG appears to revolve around the evil forces unleashed with the onset of the steam age. So that's Zelda meets the industrial revolution? Okay! With more than 80 possible character modifications, there's room for personalisation in the single-player quest, while four-player versus and two-player co-op modes add social appeal. But is there really more here than a basic hack-'n'-slasher with ecological undertones? We'll see...



Hot PXL

Publisher: Atari | ETA: June

Cynics might say this is Atari doing Wario Ware, and they'd be right. With 200 micro games and 10 boss battles the idea is to go through the Story Mode completing retro inspired three second games while unlocking 'urban and street culture' designs. It all sounds a bit copy-cat, but hey, it might just work. There'll be music tracks from leading hip-hop acts, multiplayer modes and plenty of downloadable content so we're definitely keeping an open mind.



Tales of the World: Radiant Mythology

Publisher: Namco Bandai

ETA: Summer

Namco's Tales series, which includes Tales of Symphonia (GameCube) and Tales of the Abyss (PS2), are highly regarded but often overshadowed by SquareEnix's Final Fantasy games. This PSP iteration offers the most hero customisation options of any RPG to date and improves the free-roaming battle system beloved among fans. Wi-Fi trading options and major characters from other Tales games are also promised.



Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

Publisher: EA | ETA: July

Providing all the key moments from the movie, including the battle at the Ministry of Magic and the Dementor attack, players must save Hogwarts from the Dark Arts by

forming a student alliance and completing key wizardry classes. Mini-games include the joys of Exploding Snap, Gobstones and Chocolate Frogs and a full Quidditch game gets thrown in too. With an ad-hoc mode for all the mini-games and wizardry classes this is likely to be spellbinding to fans but probably less than wicked for us muggles.

Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law

Publisher: Capcom | ETA: Autumn

This legal eagle is a popular character from Cartoon Network's Adult Swim channel and fights the kind of lost causes most attorneys would guffaw at. The game follows in the footsteps of Phoenix Wright and involves clue-gathering, courtroom battles and interactive storytelling. There are cool guest stars too...



Dead Head Fred

Publisher: D3 | ETA: Summer

Set in an alternative 1940s replete with mob bosses and mutants the idea is to take the hero on a roaring rampage of revenge, to find his head. After waking up from a bizarre experiment (sans head obviously) Fred must piece together his past and take out the gangland hoodlums responsible for his murder. Said to contain an innovative camera system, players will also be able to don heads, Worzel Gummidge-style, to grant Fred special abilities. Gruesomely novel.



ROUGH CUTS

More PSP games...



COMING SOON

Tomb Raider: Anniversary (May 25)... Dragonball Z Shin Budokai 2 (May 25)... Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas (May 25)... Coded Arms Contagion (May 30)... Driver 76 (May 30)...
Capcom Puzzle World (June 1)... NBA 2007 (June 8)... Brunswick Bowling (June 15)... The Cube (June 29)... Guitar Hits 2006 (June 29)... Dungeons & Dragons Tactics (June 29)...

SNAKE NEEDS RECRUITS- ARE YOU IN?

THE FIRST METAL GEAR ADVENTURE ON PSP® SYSTEM

In this first Metal Gear adventure for PSP® System, your leadership skills are under scrutiny as well as your close combat reactions and stealth tactics. Recruit non-playable characters for your mission or search via wireless access points for volunteers to build a crack team to take on your enemies. Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops continues the Story of Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater and starts a new chapter on PSP® System. Be a part of this breathtaking story - and have your friends watching your back as you go.

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MUSIC BY NORIHIKO HIGINO / ENDING THEME "CALLING TO THE NIGHT" VOCALS BY NATASHA FARROW / DIRECTOR: MASAHIRO YAMAMOTO / PRODUCER: NORIYAKI OKAMURA / GENERAL MANAGER & PRODUCER: HIDEO KOJIMA
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DS

iNCOMING

Coming to a dualscreen near you!



Jam Sessions

Publisher: Ubisoft | ETA: July 2007

This left-field effort promises a 'guitar in your pocket' enabling players to produce chords and notes by strumming the stylus across the touchscreen. The simple interface should turn even the most tone deaf gamer into Joe Satriani. Features Tutorial, Free Play and Performance modes (the latter with classical and rock tracks), plus a facility to record your own tunes.

Sonic Rush Adventure

Publisher: Sega | ETA: Autumn

Incorporating both 2D and 3D levels, Sonic Rush Adventure takes Sega's enduring mascot through seven levels of pirate mayhem. As usual the main objective is to collect rings and reach the goal in super-fast time, but with a fleet of five ships, including a submarine, water-bike and hovercraft, players can also take to the seas and control vessels with the stylus. Thankfully, it looks like a more forgiving and fun experience than the previous Sonic Rush outing.



Chibi Robo: Park Patrol

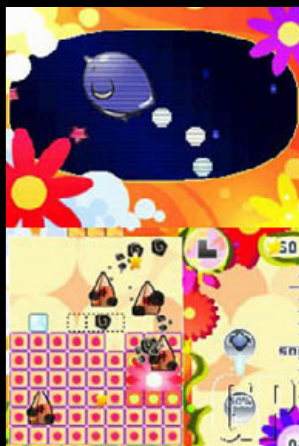
Publisher: Nintendo | ETA: TBC

Chibi Robo on GameCube was one of those titles that flew under practically everyone's radar but remains a much loved classic among the videogame cognoscenti. For this DS outing our mechanical hero escapes to the outside world and is tasked with restoring a local playground to its original beauty. With new vehicles including buggies, cars and boats this is likely to be brilliantly compulsive, deserving a far wider audience.



ROUGH CUTS

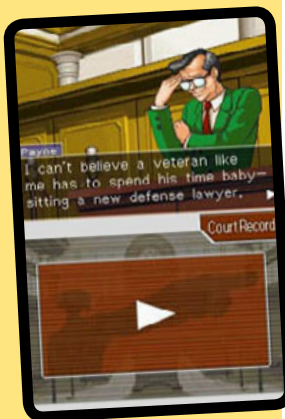
More DS games...



Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations

Publisher: Capcom | ETA: September

The third Phoenix Wright title contains the usual concoction of Columbo-style evidence gathering, court room drama and bizarre manga characters but is said to be the final chapter in the series (ahh). The 'psyche-lock' feature returns letting you brow-beat witnesses for information and players will also take on cases as Wright's boss, Mia Fey. The best Phoenix yet? It's an open and shut case.



Touch Darts

Publisher: Sega | ETA: July 2007

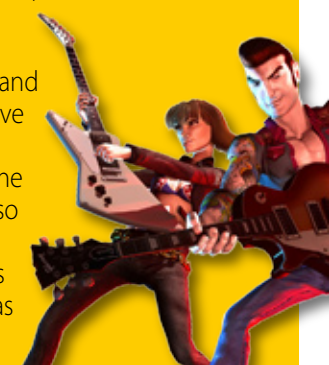
This highly stylised representation of the pub sport seems a perfect fit for quick on-the-go gaming and comes complete with tournament modes and a Wi-Fi multiplayer feature. Said to accurately replicate the feel of throwing a dart by using the stylus on the touchscreen we remain sceptical yet hopeful. If it's more refined and accurate than the darts game included in Nintendo's 42 All-Time Classics then we'll be the first up to the oche.



Guitar Hero III DS

Publisher: Red Octane | ETA: Early 2008

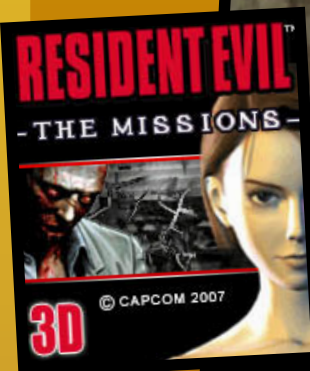
It may be some way away but the recent announcement that Guitar Hero III is coming to DS is cause for celebration. Scant information is available but we do expect it to include touch-screen stylus strumming, the usual glut of rocking tunes and multiplayer competitive modes via Wi-Fi. As a Wii version is also in the pipeline there may also be some interesting link-up plans afoot. As ever, you'll get more as soon as we hear it.



COMING
SOON

Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass (June)... Touchmaster (June 22)... Chronos Twin (June 22)... Sim City DS (June 22)... Pokémon Diamond/Pearl (June 30)... Impossible Mission (June)... Guru Guru (July 2)... Monster Puzzle (July 2)... Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle (July)... Transformers (July)... Godzilla Unleashed (Autumn)... Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights (Autumn)...

MOBILE NEWS

*Resident Evil:
The Missions 3D***Publisher:** Capcom **ETA:** June

Based around Resident Evil 3, the latest mobile take on Capcom's hit series promises an authentically gory third-person action adventure. Jill Valentine and Carlos Oliveira must shoot and slice their way through 100 missions, saving the last citizens of Raccoon City from the zombie scum. The 3D visuals hover around PSone quality so nostalgic zombie-slayers will be in their element.

*Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail***Publisher:** Vivendi **ETA:** June

Everyone's favourite lounge lizard is back, creepily hovering around yet more beautiful women in his latest mobile outing. Love for Sail is a return to the classic PC adventures of the eighties with a puzzle-filled storyline dragging the hapless Larry through casinos, planes and cruise ships on his quest for love. Looks like there'll be multiple endings depending, we suspect, on your chat-up routines. Sleazy fun is more or less guaranteed.

*Prey***Publisher:** Skyzone **ETA:** 2008

Gravity-flipping, alien abduction shooter Prey is mobile bound, courtesy of US developer MachineWorks Northwest. The game was a smash hit on Xbox 360 and PC last year, thanks to its unusual hero, Tommy, a spirit-walking Cherokee garage mechanic abducted by aliens and able to run along the walls of his mothership prison while blasting enemies. Look, it makes perfect sense to us. The mobile version features 3D visuals, a new story and loads of fresh locations. There are no UK release plans yet, but we'll keep watching the skies...

*Stuntman:
Ignition***Publisher:** THQ Wireless **ETA:** Autumn

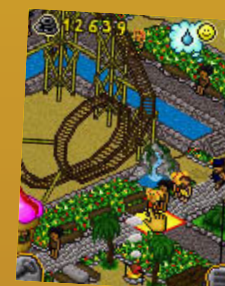
The original Stuntman on PS2 was a great idea that never quite lived up to the promise. Five years later an enticing sequel is on the way to consoles and mobile phone. Sadly, THQ Wireless has revealed few details, but you'll no doubt be working your way from novice chancer to veteran stunt legend via a series of movies and stunt tasks. The console versions boast a fab stunt construction kit – will mobile gamers be so lucky? We'll soon find out.

*Shock Blocks***Publisher:** Vivendi **ETA:** June

Thank the lord, it's an entirely new take on the block-sorting puzzler. No really. In Shock Blocks, you shake, flip and rotate the board to line up blocks of the same colour. That's right, you control the background rather than the shapes themselves. Sounds intriguing and with 41 levels and two different modes to play through it should keep veteran block-rockers happy for hours. Is this the casual hit of 2007?

*Prehistoric
Fun Park***Publisher:** THQ Wireless**ETA:** July

Frustrated that Theme Park wasn't set one million years ago? THQ Wireless has the answer. Prehistoric Fun Park is a fresh take on the amusement park strategy sim, where your aim is to construct the perfect attraction for caveman tourists, using a selection of 25 rides. It's all about balance, tweaking prices so both the punters and your bank manager are happy. But how is the setting exploited? Sabre-tooth tiger rides, perhaps?



Be a contender. Be in the action. Be Toseland!



THE OFFICIAL VIDEOGAME
SBK-07
SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



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Brolly girl images provided by www.gridgrrlz.biz

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HANDS ON

PSP

WipEout Pulse

The hover racing legend gets a brand new attraction...

The future is back. Two years after its triumphant debut on the fledgling PSP, WipEout is scorching towards a whole new starting grid. Boasting 24 tracks, eight teams including the new EG-X outfit and seven game modes, Pulse is another epic slab of sci-fi jet racing action. But there's more to this than numbers. Pulse is about gravity. Or lack of it.

While WipEout has always featured seriously undulating tracks, Pulse takes it one step further with the addition of mag strips – magnetic track sections that allow the craft to cope

with 90 degree drops and stomach-churning loops. "We added this to give us greater variety in track design," explains lead designer, Colin Berry. "We did not want to permanently lock the ships to the track for a rollercoaster feel, so rather than change the entire track we came up with the idea of having



"Pulse adds three fresh weapons including a leech beam which sucks shield energy from rival craft"



The art team has updated all the lighting effects since WipEout Pure.

magnetic sections. Because of this we've been able to play around more with the vertical aspects of the environments so we've really tried to re-enforce the feeling of height and vertigo."

Engine tweaks

The game engine is also getting a major tune-up. The team now has considerable experience with Sony's handheld, via both Pure and a more recent project, F1. Naturally, this has benefited their latest project. As lead programmer Marc Littlemore confirms, "The need to create a realistic F1 racing game with 22 cars meant that the team had to learn more about the PSP's architecture and how to make the best use of it. Many optimisations used on F1 have been folded back into our core libraries and this has helped us to gain

greater speed increases in the WipEout game engine. In addition, we've made many more low level optimisations in areas where we've found bottlenecks. Hopefully this will provide the best WipEout experience yet!"

Weapons systems have also been overhauled. Pulse adds three fresh options to the Pure arsenal, including a leech beam which previously appeared in WipEout 3 and sucks shield energy from rival craft. The two others are totally new. Berry won't say any more but stresses that balance has been a key concern: "because of this, we have added an Elimination mode to showcase the new weapons rather than adding them to the normal race mode. This benefits us in several ways, it gives us a new game mode, it allows the main racing to retain the correct



> WipEout continued

balance and it adds uniqueness to the new mode as well."

Another area of concern is handling. The series has a unique feel that Pulse seeks to build on, without alienating fans – hence a model that's built largely around Pure's dynamics. There have been some important tweaks, though. "The acceleration system has been changed to give all the ships a greater base acceleration," says Berry. "This is a key improvement over Pure and gives

the game a real 'wow' feel from the outset. The weight distribution of the ships has also been altered slightly to make some rear heavy and others nose heavy. This is a very subtle difference but just adds an extra degree of depth to the whole handling model."

Solid competition

Crucially, Pulse will feature ad-hoc, LAN and infrastructure support, allowing up to eight players to race against each other. With infrastructure, the team is constantly monitoring the framerate and designer Clark Davies says they'll be tweaking code until the very end of the project: "we are looking to provide a solid online experience first and foremost, meaning our online feature-set will be kept to the essentials for accessibility and simplicity." And like

visual adornments. There are some exacting fans out there, after all, so every addition needs careful planning. As Berry observes, "It's impossible to please everyone in terms of how the ships feel and react as there will always be a few who prefer a 'floatier' feel and some who want the ships to behave more like cars. Certainly we were happy with the overall handling model of Pure, though we knew there was room for improvement and tweaks, which is what we have aimed to do in Pulse. Refine rather than re-invent..." ●

All the familiar race teams are present, plus a newcomer named EG-X.



ON THE PULSE

Behind the scenes with the WipEout team



Scenery

Wizardry

Variety

Scenery

Colin Fawcett, lead artist: "We've brought in more natural elements so the tracks aren't quite as city based as they were in Pure. We still have city based tracks but we've gone for more varied environments this time out."

"Pulse is shaping up to be a worthy successor to Pure, adding some fiendish new design features"

Pure, there'll be downloadable extras including new circuits, ships and music. The licensed soundtrack listing hasn't been finalised yet, but the likes of Mason, Loco Dice and Stanton Warriors are down to supply tracks. Sony says you'll also be able to play your own MP3 files direct from a memory stick.

Pulse is shaping up to be a worthy thematic successor to Pure, taking its predecessor's back-to-basics handling and set-up, but adding some fiendish new design features and stunning



The 24 tracks feature both claustrophobic tunnel sections and wide open exteriors.



Our pulses are definitely racing...

HANDS ON

PSP

DS

Worms : Open Warfare 2

Worms is bigger, better, and more volatile than ever. Watch out for the Super Sheep...

When Worms first exploded onto handhelds last year, a few hardcore fans were left feeling a bit disappointed. Whilst the game was still fantastically enjoyable, many felt it was let down slightly by notable omissions, most specifically, the lack of an online mode, and the limited selection of weapons. So, when Team17 informed us they'd listened to the fan feedback, made the necessary changes, and offered us a chance to take a trip to their headquarters for some hands-on time with the sequel, we weren't about to say no.

The single biggest change is that Worms is now fully online (hooray!)

Both PSP and DS versions contain a full raft of multiplayer features, including messaging, friends lists, leaderboards, and even support for clans and downloadable content on PSP. The game supports up to four players online across all game types, and the leaderboards are comprehensive, tracking the best players, teams and clans – there's even one for the world's worst players!

Worm farming

Team17 has made a real effort to focus on the community this time round, and this is enforced by the sheer number of customisation tools they've given you to play with. From changing your team's flag (which can be created yourself using a paint-type application), to editing weapon sets, or even decking out your team in funky hats, there's a plethora of customisation options here to help make your worms stand out online.

"Open Warfare 2 even comes with a map editor! It's easy, but powerful"

What's more, Open Warfare 2 even comes with a fully featured map editor! It's an incredibly easy, but powerful program to use, especially on the DS, where you can simply draw your levels using the touchscreen. It's possible to make maps for all gametypes using the editor, and, even more impressively, you can take them online.

The theme for Open Warfare 2 is "War through the ages", and this has inspired the environments you'll see throughout the game (the screens around this article show you the Pirates, WW1, WW2 and Cold War settings). Although, somewhat disappointingly, you don't get a different weapon set per environment, each level does have a number of Special Events that occur randomly throughout the course of each battle. These Special Events can include anything from an enemy bombing run, to an earthquake, and the idea is that they'll make you drop

There are 11 new weapons, but old faves like dynamite sticks are back, too.

The 2D visuals have been updated with some nice use of parallax scrolling.





> Worms continued

whatever strategy you're working on, turning the battle on its head. This was made painfully obvious to us during one of our games. We were on top of a hill when suddenly a message pops up on screen – "Enemy bombing run inbound". Frantically, every other team uses their turn to run and head for cover. Not us. We stick it out – we're in too good a position to waste our turn hiding. Then the bombing run blows us clean off the top of our hill, killing our worm, while the other players sit safe inside their bunkers, sniggering to themselves. The whole purpose of

As usual, knocking enemy worms into the brine is a quick way of finishing 'em.

"There are 33 weapons including the return of favourites such as the Holy Hand Grenade"



these events is to add an extra level of strategic depth to proceedings, and force the player to make a choice – should you stay, or should you go?

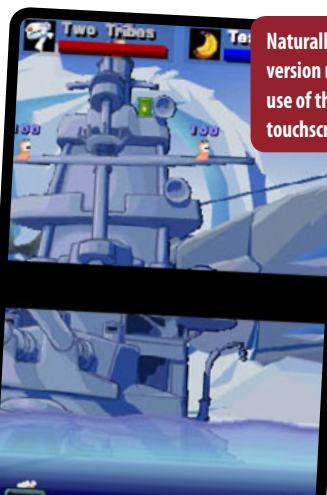
Annelid arsenal

Of course, it wouldn't be a Worms game without a whole host of new weapons, and Open Warfare 2 doesn't disappoint. There are 33 weapons in total, including the return of series favourites such as the Holy Hand Grenade and Super Sheep, as well as new additions such as the Electro

Magnet and Bunker Buster. The former is an object you can drop anywhere around the map that will repel any metal object that comes near it, such as air strikes, or bazooka shells, making your worm almost invincible when he's hiding behind it. The anti-darkside Bunker Buster is a bomb that drops from the sky and burrows down into the map until it either finds another player who's hiding, or reaches a certain depth. Cowardly Worms players had better develop a new strategy pretty fast...

After playing four-player multiplayer on the DS for many hours, we have just one thing to say. We're excited. Open Warfare 2 is everything the first game should have been: balanced, smooth, strategic, and a hell of a lot of fun. Brace yourself world, the worms are turning. They're online, they're handheld. They're almost here. ●

Naturally, the DS version makes full use of the stylus and touchscreen set-up.



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

What the two handheld versions offer

PSP

The PSP version has an exclusive mode – the Race mode, which sees your worm racing from one side of the map to the other. It's a real proving ground for your "133+" ninja rope skills.

Both versions include online play across all modes, with messaging, leaderboards and friends codes, but only the PSP supports clans, due to Nintendo's regulations.

PSP users can also upload maps to a central Worms server, and download other users' creations.

Whilst the PSP version will allow you to put hats on your Worms, sadly, the DS version doesn't. Boo!

DS

The DS version's exclusive mode is a series of mini-games that make use of DS exclusive functions, such as the touchscreen and built-in microphone.

The DS version allows online multiplayer, as well as offline multi- and single-cart linking. You can even beam a demo of Open Warfare 2 to your friends.

Graphically, both versions look similar. While the PSP benefits immensely from the widescreen resolution, the DS handles the new vertical maps much more efficiently. We like 'em both!



PSP

DS

HGZine

WORMS OPEN WARFARE 2

HOW COMPLETE?

EXCITEMENT

90%

89%

This means warfare!

PSP

HANDS ON

Smash Court Tennis 3

When it comes to tennis there can be only one

There are three tennis franchises capable of competing at the top level: Sega's Virtua Tennis, 2K's Top-Spin and Namco's Smash Court Tennis series. Historically, the Smash Court games have always come in last due to a lack of dynamism, accessible controls and the crucial fun factor.

Unfortunately, after playing the latest build of Namco Bandai's first tennis outing on PSP it looks like business as usual. The main problem is that this series doesn't really know if it wants to be light-hearted and knockabout (the mini-games and player customisation options are brilliantly quirky) or a challenging simulation. The core shots, such as slice, lob and top-spin, are assigned to the face buttons

"It seems to lack the fluidity and flamboyance of its rivals, especially Virtua Tennis 3"

but here the focus is on timing your strokes for power rather than walloping the ball by holding down the shot button. Yes, this may better replicate tennis in the real world but it feels far less satisfying.

Presently there just isn't enough feedback to gauge if your shot timing is on song and it's nigh on impossible to angle shots with any kind of venom or precision. While Smash Court 3's Pro Tour mode is superbly comprehensive, offering stat upgrades, training, player customisation and a variety of world ranking tournaments, the game feels a little stiff. It seems to lack the fluidity and flamboyance of its main rivals, especially Sega's virtuoso Virtua Tennis 3. Don't expect to be diving theatrically around – it just won't happen here.

On a more positive note, Smash Court Tennis 3's technical approach does favour the tactical player with serve and volleying and delicate drop

Move onto the large flashing circle and you can smash the ball for an easy point.



Serve direction can be precisely set using the analogue nub but it takes practice!

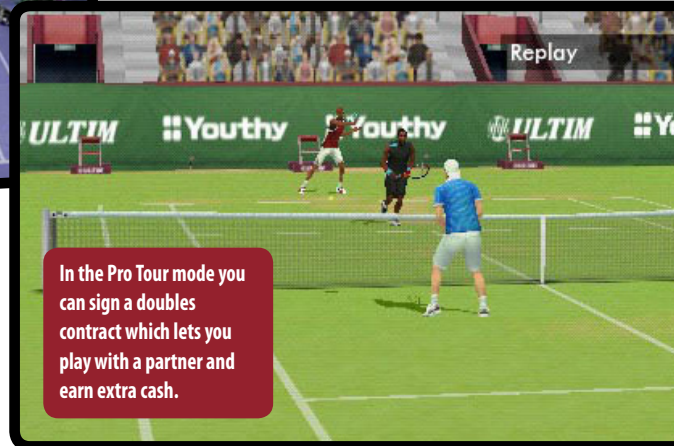
shots adding some sense of refinement. But on present evidence there's no escaping the fact that Smash Court 3 is more akin to a robotic Ivan Lendl than an exciting and theatrical Andre Agassi. ●



DEAR DIARY

Plan your Pro Tour assault

If you complete training events and tournaments, the experience points can then be converted into improving your characters stats. It works much like a typical RPG only with footwork, backhand and forehand replacing intelligence, armour and stamina. Though there are Arcade and Exhibition modes it's the in-depth Pro Tour where you'll be spending most of your time and the weekly planner adds a great deal of motivation to the enterprise.



In the Pro Tour mode you can sign a doubles contract which lets you play with a partner and earn extra cash.

Character modelling and animation are fab, even eclipsing the PSP version of Virtua Tennis 3.



PSP

HGZine

HOW COMPLETE?

85%

EXCITEMENT

70%

The number three seed in the tennis battle...

PSP

HANDS ON

SBK 07 Superbike World Championship

This isn't just biking, this is superbiking...

Motorbike racers have always operated in a quiet niche, with only Yu Suzuki's Hang On series and maybe Polyphony Digital's Tourist Trophy breaking out into the mainstream consciousness like the big car driving titles. Developer Milestone is obviously hoping to open things up with its detailed and enthusiastic take on the world of superbike racing.

Boasting an official license from the titular SBK series, the game boasts all of the bikes and riders

from the latest season as well as ten of the well-known circuits and, for that extra touch of environmental realism, a range of four different weather conditions. In the PSP version we'll see 14 riders taking to the Tarmac, each with competitive AI, all jostling for space on the knife-edge racing line. Importantly, Milestone – a seasoned bike sim specialist – has gone for ultra realistic physics, capturing the unique feel of motorcycle racing through the movement of the machine and the rider. You're not in a car any more.

There's a full sim option with tyre wear, bike damage and the like, but newcomers can select arcade, which also provides automatic riding assists to help you through those first few demanding laps. It's also possible to tweak bike elements before the race, for that personally tuned feel. We've belted through the PS2 version and found the racing incredibly challenging, the bike twitching beneath us at high-speed and more than ready to spin-out

"Milestone – a seasoned bike specialist – has gone for ultra-realistic physics"

It's all about staying very close to the racing line from here on. Accuracy is everything.

14 riders take part in each race. It's quite a dense crowd on the small screen.

The range of officially licensed circuits will provide some familiar views for fans.

You'll need to keep balance and rider position in mind on the corners.

The bikes are, of course, closely modelled on the real-life machines.



if you don't treat corners with respect.

Modes include Quick Race, Race Weekend and Championship, and throughout, players are able to unlock extras including videos and historical info. There's also a Wi-Fi four-player

mode. In short, Milestone, has done everything it can to appease both superbike superfans and newcomers who just fancy a quick whiz around Silverstone on two-wheels. Just be ready – it's as dangerous as it looks...

HGZine
SBK-07
SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

HOW COMPLETE?

95%

EXCITEMENT

80%

Can SBK 07 turn gamers into bikers?

PSP

HANDS ON

World Championship Poker 2

The biggest players in the world line up for some high stakes hold 'em action

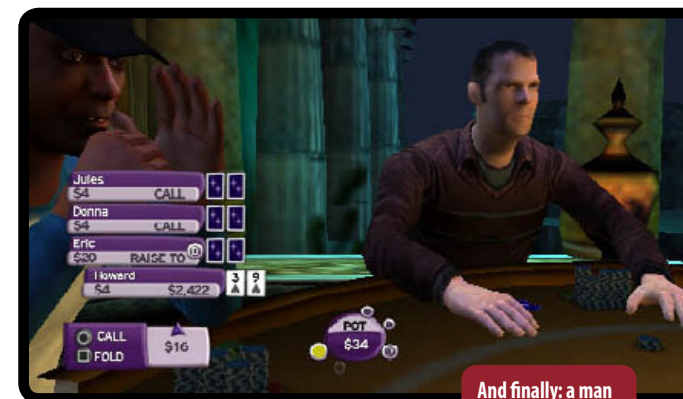
It's not fun to lose a pot with the nut low because you are playing high only." Apparently. And if that means anything to you, you're obviously one of the millions of people attracted by the massive success of poker in recent years, facilitated by the fat bonuses of city bankers and the rise and rise of online gambling. And if you *are* one of the millions of new gambling addicts you'll probably forgive World Championship Poker 2's unadorned presentation because you'll be too busy enjoying the heady rush of probability and bluff against the game's already convincing AI opponents.

That appears to be the game's real strength: the quality of the AI. And judging by the near-complete version we played, its real weakness is that it's

a bit rough around the edges. It also does little to entice new players to the joys of poker. Indeed, if you're not already an experienced player, even the game's tutorial screen is rather overwhelming, listing, as it does, the 14 different games on offer, which range from Texas Hold 'em to Crazy Pineapple. You can take part in any of them over the course of the game's career mode, which sees you scaling the heights of the global tournament circuit, or you can play them against other PSP and PS2 owners online thanks to the game's Wi-Fi multiplayer.

But the real concern with World Championship Poker 2, and it's not likely to be addressed by the finished

product, is that there is a fundamental flaw with videogame poker: just like in real life, you'll spend most of your time folding. Unlike real life, that gets pretty boring pretty quickly because you have to sit through the lifeless animations of other players instead of enjoying the camaraderie and banter of a night out with your mates. And you can't win (or lose) any real money. ●



And finally: a man playing poker.

It really *doesn't* get more exciting: this is a man playing poker. Again.

"Just like in real-life you'll spend most of your time folding. That gets boring"

LOAD AND "LEARN"

Improve your poker while you wait?

To keep you entertained during the game's many loading screens, there's a series of 'power tips'. Some of these are useless ("the more you play, the better you will get") but there's also plenty of sound advice ("being superstitious is not a good trait for a poker player").



It's some people playing poker. It doesn't get more exciting than this.



HOW COMPLETE?

95%

EXCITEMENT

65%

We might have to fold...



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"Farming is hard work you know!"

Harvest Moon creator Yasuhiro Wada talks about the origins and future of his much-loved series...



Wada's upbringing in rural Japan inspired the series.



"As a creative person I'm inspired by my environment"



Harvest Moon DS is yet another essential instalment in the series.

Harvest Moon. It should need no introduction. But if you've spent the last ten years tilling the land with an ox, it's a series of games about living on a farm. Sounds rather esoteric, but somehow, the peculiar challenge of growing crops, raising livestock and even getting married has kept gamers entertained for over a decade. Recently, HGZine caught up with series creator and all-round industry legend Yasuhiro Wada to talk about the two new titles in the series. And while we were at it, we also covered everything from Microsoft handhelds to his preference between the DS and PSP.

A videogame about being a farmer... what's that all about?

Two factors, as a boy, I grew up in the

countryside so as a creative person I'm naturally inspired by my environment and experiences – but also, there was no-one doing this type of game back then – it was something new and fresh, and that also attracted me.

Did you grow up on a farm then?

No, no, I just grew up in rural Japan. But I know a lot about the countryside and I appreciate both the goodness and how we interact with it.

Have you ever wanted to be a farmer in real life?

No. Farming is very hard work you know!

Is the concept your idea or do you work with others?

The concept is all mine, but some of

the gameplay scenarios rely on the support of others.

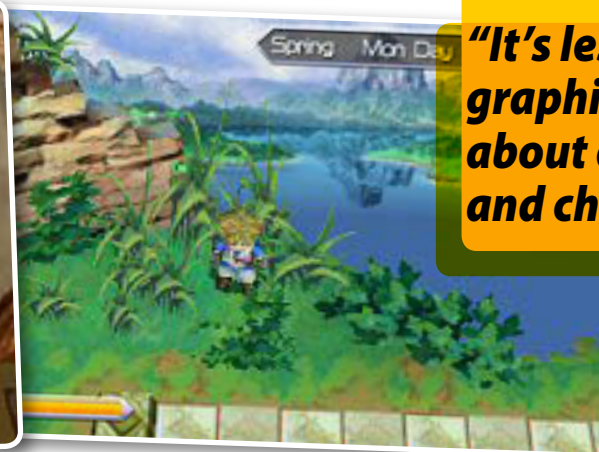
Why did you decide to not include Wi-Fi capabilities with Harvest Moon DS?

This game was actually developed at the very early stage of DS when there simply wasn't many Wi-Fi facilities around, plus I wanted to concentrate on the characters' development within the game itself rather than communicating with elements outside. There are over 300,000 lines of dialogue; I believe that to be the most inside any DS game.

You've developed now on both the DS and PSP, which handheld do you think offers the most



Harvest Moon: Innocent Life on PSP offers new settings and objectives.



"It's less about graphics and more about ease of use and charm"

DS

HARVEST MOON DS
Publisher: Rising Star
Developer: Marvelous
OUT NOW

PSP

HARVEST MOON:
INNOCENT LIFE
Publisher: Rising Star
Developer: ArtePiazza
ETA: May

> Interview continued

functionality and potential?

PSP certainly offers more immediate potential due to its hardware capability but there is still plenty of work to do in the development process to take full advantage of the system. Cartridge is the most suitable format for Harvest Moon. There is a charm that lies within the cartridge, it's less about graphics and more about ease and accessibility.

Which platform is easier to develop for – PSP or DS?

DS without a doubt. Nintendo fully

supports the development community through making the very best tools and middleware available to us.

If you had to choose one handheld platform to support, which would you go for?

Nintendo DS

Would you like to see Microsoft bring out a handheld?

Yes, but I think the possibility of one reaching the market in this product cycle is quite low.

Have you heard any whispers about a handheld from Microsoft?

I am certain that Microsoft is spending time developing a platform but as I say, whether it reaches the market or not is another thing.

Were there any amazing ideas that you weren't able to implement in the final game?

Wi-Fi, no question.

So when is the next visit to Harvest

Moon planned?

It'll be about a year from now – in Japan at least.

What ambitions would you like to realise in the next series of Harvest Moon games?

To enlarge the freedom of playability, to really open this world we've built to a wider audience. For example, the character you create at the beginning, he can go through the game enjoying quite a solitary experience and meeting maybe only a handful of characters. Alternatively, he could meet a hundred people, it really depends how you play it and that's the kind of freedom I want to offer gamers.

What's your favourite Harvest Moon game?

The Nintendo 64 version, without a doubt. I had a lot of fun both creating and playing that game.

Looking at the gaming industry as whole, what opportunities do you see for the handheld gaming?

I think as far as consoles are concerned only Nintendo will remain in the market. Sony and Microsoft are heading towards the world of the PC with higher specs and more features that are outside of just games. As for Nintendo, it will remain as a console hardware company because Nintendo views the whole development process in a different way to the other two (Sony and Microsoft). Nintendo sees the console as a toy, something to be played with rather than a computer. As for the handheld market specifically, it's just going to get bigger and bigger, because more and more people are playing and enjoying them.

What are your favourite handheld games at the moment?

The Legend of Zelda and Sim City games. I can play them for hours.

If Harvest Moon were set in a real-world location, where would it be?

Certainly in Europe... Switzerland, possibly, but with the Mediterranean climate! ●

Wada with his cute and cuddly Harvest Moon DS cast in the background.



CULT GAMES!

The Ten Best Games You've Never Played

Want to try something *really* different? HGZine presents a fistful of imports and rarities you **MUST** track down...



Ouendan lets you save the world with male cheerleaders.



1. Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan (DS)

You might be familiar with its Western remake, Elite Beat Agents (though that's still unreleased in the UK), but Ouendan remains a true original. Helping male cheerleaders save the world by tapping the touchscreen in time to punky J-pop may sound odd, but iNiS' classic formula makes for a rhythm-action masterpiece. Much better tunes than EBA, too.

Chance of a UK release: 0/10

Elite Beat Agents doesn't count – same mechanics, different game.

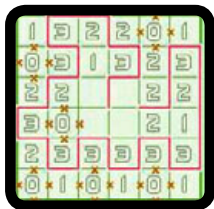


2. Gitaroo Man Lives! (PSP)

This remake of the cult (translation: unsuccessful) PS2 gem had a very limited PAL release, so it's hard to find. It's well worth hunting down, though – the PSP's analogue nub suddenly becoming the perfect control method for the titular space-guitar as you bend strings and dodge attacks in another corker from quirk-kings iNiS.

Rarity rating: 8/10 Start checking eBay – you won't find this in many shops.

3. Puzzle Series Vol. 5: Slitherlink (DS)



Numbered boxes say how many of their sides need filling in to create an unbroken snaking line through grids

of increasing size. Sounds dull, but Slitherlink is a work of terrifyingly addictive genius. It's a logic puzzler par excellence, wonderfully executed by makers Hudson, and gives your brain a workout that makes Kawashima look like Kerry Katona.

Chance of a UK release: 5/10

Possible, given the rise of Brain Training, though it's fairly import friendly anyway.



4. DJ Max Portable (PSP)

Astonishingly hard and amazingly accomplished 'bemani' (DJ sim) title, which bizarrely still isn't down for a Western release. With a difficulty level that isn't so much steep as near-vertical, it's a challenge for any gamer, but you'll certainly have fun trying. A massive selection of tunes, and some fantastic visuals make this turntable-'em-up a must for hardcore players.

Chance of a UK release: 3/10

Surely it'd have happened by now. Still, there's always hope...

5. Bleach: Heat The Soul (PSP)

Impressively intense and balanced brawler based on the manga with some unstoppably grin-inducing specials and quite beautiful cel-shaded graphics. If you're a fan of the anime, this (or any of its three sequels) is well worth checking out, though getting your hands on a copy could prove tricky.

Chance of a UK release: 0/10

The strange legalities behind the license means we'll never see this. Shame.



Yasutora 'Chad' Sado: one of the key fighters in Bleach.

THE CULT GAME BUYER'S GUIDE

Attaining the unattainable

With the rare UK releases on this list, it's always wise to trawl the internet, or just go hunting round your local game store as regularly as you can – perhaps even ask whether they can reserve a copy if they get one in (usually pre-owned). As for imports, DS stuff is no problem – simply visit www.play-asia.com or <http://global.yesasia.com> which both have a large selection. PSP games are more difficult, thanks to Sony's strict rules on importing – importer Lik-Sang was forced to close for selling Japanese Sony hardware – but you should be able to find a few willing sellers on eBay.

"Some unstoppably grin-inducing specials and quite beautiful cel-shaded graphics"

> Cult games continued

6. Gurumin: A Monstrous Adventure (PSP)

Almost stealth-released in the UK by 505 Games just last month, this little beauty is far too good to be described as monstrous. A delightful action-adventure with a cutesy style that makes it perfect for younger gamers but packing enough challenge and depth to satisfy anyone. It's not too late to get your hands on Gurumin...

Rarity rating: 6/10 Will soon be harder to find than a Jim Davidson fan. Get buying now!

7. Rhythm Tengoku (GBA)

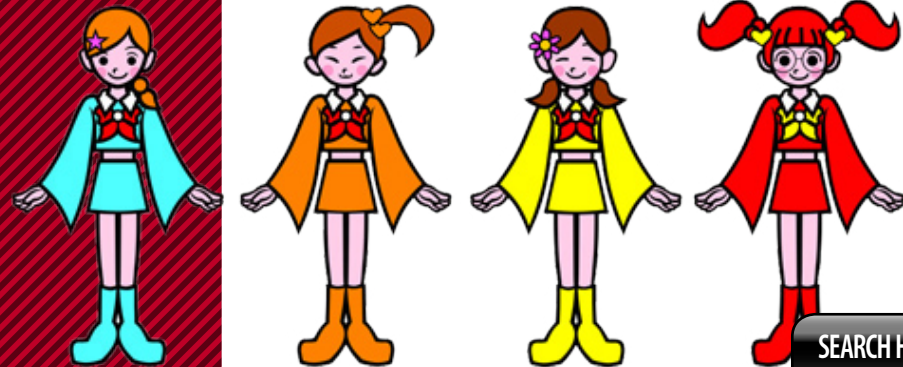
Staggeringly inventive rhythm-game which strips the genre down to the bare bones – with barely two buttons used throughout, it's all about the beat, baby. With tap-dancing monkeys, clapping bears, and hairy onions which need epilating (don't ask), this marvel from the guys behind Wario Ware is one of the last original greats for the humble GBA.

Chance of a UK release: 2/10 GBA support is waning. And it's VERY Japanese.

Eccentric and stylish, Rhythm Tengoku is one for fashionistas.



"The gameplay is some of the most compelling we've yet experienced on the machine"



8. Professor Layton and the Strange City (DS)

Absolutely gorgeous puzzler-cum-adventure game, which has you solving a series of increasingly tough puzzles while venturing through the titular town controlling the Prof. and his young assistant. With its fully-voiced dialogue, some stunning cutscenes and a visual style that reeks of arthouse animated classic Belleville Rendez-vous, keep everything crossed that this makes the journey to PAL-land.

Chance of a UK release: 6/10 Tons of dialogue and text, but it was a huge hit in Japan and could conceivably attract the Touch Generations audience.

9. Power Stone Collection (PSP)

Two hugely underrated Smash Bros-esque brawlers which enjoyed success in their native Japan on the Dreamcast, repackaged together for Sony's handheld. Copies sold in the UK? Around 49, we estimate. Pity, as these are two lost classics, as unappreciated as they are chaotic and addictive.

Rarity rating: 5/10 May turn up in the odd bargain bin of shops unaware of its value. Keep your eyes peeled.



10. Black Jack Ti No Tori Hen (DS)

Another anime special, this time with you controlling mysterious surgeon Black Jack as he performs a series of sometimes bizarre operations upon various patients. It's like a fantastical, cartoonised Trauma Center with timed stylus motions replacing precision scalpel and suture work. Quite gruesome in places, but well worth a try if you're into medical sims.

Chance of a UK release: 1/10 Reams of Japanese dialogue plus an unfamiliar-to-Westerners license mean this will remain in the East.



Power Stone's Brit brawler, Falcon (aka Fokker in Japan).

FIVE GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED – AND, BELIEVE US, YOU NEVER SHOULD

Not everything that comes out of Japan is worth buying, nor are all rarities must-haves. Stay clear of these...



Astonishia Story

Mawasunda!

Rengoku

Minna No Curling

Bit Generations

Astonishia Story (DS)

Ultra old-school RPG that's just a dull, wearisome trudge of a game. Feels like it should have been released ten years ago, though, to be honest, it wouldn't have been much cop then either.

**NEW MAGAZINE!
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PSP



Publisher: Sony

Developer: Zipper

Interactive

Heritage: SOCOM series

Link: www.zipperint.com/

ETA: May 11

SOCOM U.S. Navy SEALs: Fireteam Bravo 2

"Local influence earns you black market weapons and intelligence"

More modern battle mayhem with the savage SEAL squad.

Fireteam Bravo 2 pretty much picks up where its predecessor left off: it's a third- or first-person action game which sees you counter-terrorising the living daylights out of all sorts of bad guys. Like the last SOCOM game on the PSP, it's decent enough when you play it on your own but the real point of the game is its multiplayer modes. Unlike the last SOCOM game on the PSP, Fireteam Bravo 2 introduces a couple of new features.

The skeletal plot that sets up the action sees you helping the (fictional) fledgling democracy of Adjikistan on behalf of the US government. Which doesn't mean you'll be partying in the green zone after securing all the oil

fields. Nope, instead you'll be wandering through a multitude of fairly linear levels, shooting the bad guys as you go. But you'll also be trying to win hearts and minds thanks to the first of the new features. Local Influence, which you earn by not killing the local civilian population, grants you various benefits, from black market weapons to intelligence reports. The other new feature, Command Equity, is pretty similar, allowing you to order supply drops or air strikes if you perform well during missions.

Unfair dismissal

One annoying thing about the game is that you can't save during missions – which seems especially perverse given the portability of the PSP. It just feels unfair to play through a mission for ten or fifteen minutes only to die and then have to go back and do all the easy bits again. The other annoying thing about the game is that it runs out of buttons pretty quickly. That's because there are quite a lot of controls: you can change your stance to make yourself harder to

Technically, Fireteam Bravo 2 is reasonably impressive, without ever stretching the PSP too far.



Your target reticle indicates whether you've got a lock on the enemy.





Missions are linear throughout the game. Keep walking and shooting.

GOING PLACES

A rough guide to Adjikistan



Scenic Village

Silent Canyon

Industrial Area

Scenic Village

Visitors to SOCOM's made-up eastern European democracy of Adjikistan will be impressed by its diverse geography, which provides a multitude of opportunities for sightseeing. Over the course of the game's 14 chapters, you'll get to admire the view from a balcony in this scenic village for example. Now, can someone serve an aperitif?



Although there's a decent single-player game, multiplayer remains the focus.



> SOCOM continued

spot; you can issue various orders to your team-mate; you can enter free-look mode to snipe at enemies; and you can select equipment from a complicated inventory screen.

One upshot of this is that it takes a little while to get to grips with it all. Another is that the game features an auto-aim system, which renders combat a contest of tactics rather than trigger finger skill – finding cover and taking up good firing positions is more important than your aim. It's perfectly satisfactory, but it does feel like the game's doing all the work.

Only connect

But Fireteam Bravo 2 is all about its extensive multiplayer support and cross-platform compatibility. By connecting your PSP to a PS2 via USB, completing objectives in Fireteam Bravo affects objectives in Combined Assault on PS2 (and vice versa). It's a neat touch, but a bit too gimmicky for the majority of players to try it out.

Unfortunately there's not much we can say about multiplayer because



"Finding cover and taking up good firing positions is more important than aiming"

The game supports voice chat if you've got a compatible PSP microphone.

Sony still hasn't switched on the servers as this review goes to press. Certainly feedback from the US is good, and there's no reason to imagine that it will be any worse than the last game. It supports 16 players, it's got 12 maps, seven modes and a plethora of features including buddy lists, leaderboards and voice chat (if you've got a PSP headset). But it remains to be seen whether it'll make up for the solid if uninspired single-player game. ●

Dave McCarthy

**HGZine
Verdict**

Single-player is still solid if uninspired; multiplayer makes up for it.

PSP

- Comprehensive multiplayer
- Cross-platform compatibility
- Cluttered controls

7

PSP

Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops

Snow's on a plane, train and automobile

The Metal Gear Solid games are something of a curate's egg: the softly, softly stealth action interspersed with lengthy cinematic set-pieces and cod philosophy has an ability to frustrate as much as mesmerise. Thankfully, Konami has

distilled all the brilliance of Metal Gear for this portable outing and largely dispensed with the superfluous moralising. What emerges is a wonderfully structured and delicately nuanced game, perfect for a quick ten minute blast or mammoth session.



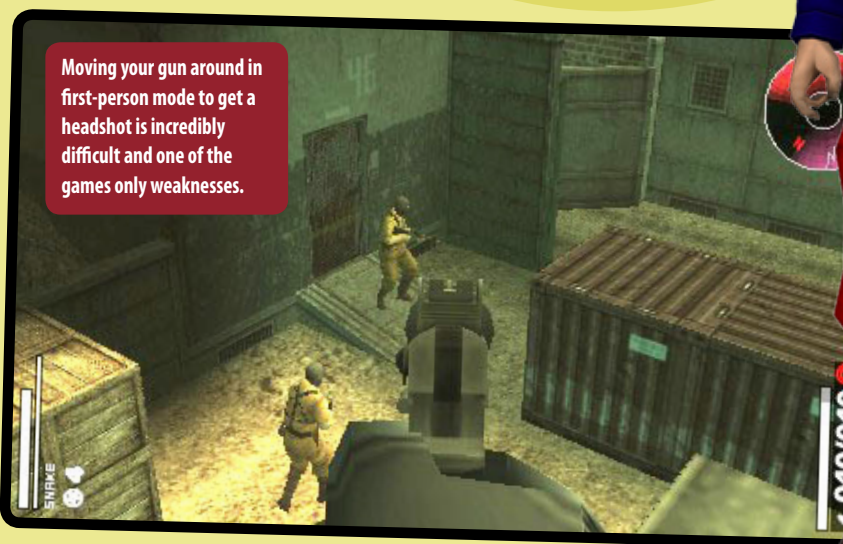
Set six years after the events of Snake Eater, Portable Ops invites you to South America to find ex-members of Snake's old FOX unit who are plotting something nefarious with the Russians. Could it be anything to do with a bipedal nuclear-capable vehicle? As you would expect from a portable Snake adventure mission environments are smaller but still deliver enough enemies and interior/exterior locations

"A wonderfully structured game, perfect for a ten minute blast or mammoth session"

to avoid claustrophobia. From rail bridges to hospitals there's just enough variety to keep you interested – but some more colour (the game's brown palette does get repetitive) would have been welcome.

Raid and recruit

In terms of raw MGS mechanics it's all here: sneaking, radar blips, alert warnings, wall-hugging, choking enemies and interrogation moves but there's a compulsive new element to Portable Ops that enlivens the entire experience: the ability to recruit squad members. A major part of the game sees you disarming soldiers and dragging them back to your van so they fight for your cause. It sounds preposterous



RECRUITMENT DRIVE

Your renegade agent needs you!



Press Ganged



Fitting Right In



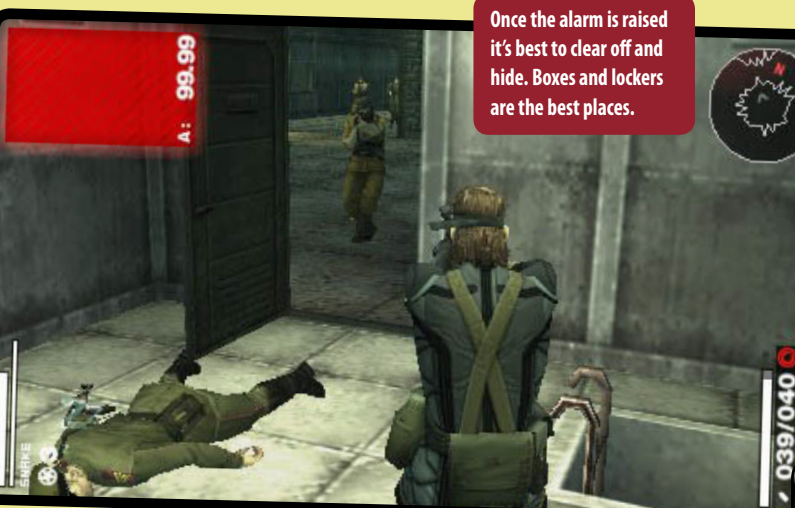
Cruising Hotspots



Press Ganged

Drag an unconscious soldier back to the van and he or she will automatically be added to your recruits list. They generally stay in 'prison' for a couple of missions but once they've successfully been persuaded to fight the cause you can assign them to one of four teams: sneaking, spy, technical or medical.

Once the alarm is raised it's best to clear off and hide. Boxes and lockers are the best places.



> MGS continued

but this sets up a beautiful meta game in which you assign newly recruited soldiers to spy for you, build new technology and heal wounded men.

It's all managed via a clever menu and teams of four can be sent spying for crucial intelligence in one area while you take another team of four on a mission elsewhere. Though you can only control one squad member at a time (the other three hide in the iconic cardboard boxes) the advantage of taking a uniformed soldier behind enemy lines is clear: you are already in disguise allowing quick access to areas.

To give you some idea of Portable Ops' squad-based scope we only need say that up to 100 recruits can be drafted, each with their own name, abilities, stats and specialities. After a while you really start to connect with key characters mainly because they can be killed in battle if you're not careful. There are also some fantastic local and web-based multiplayer modes which make use of your recruits brilliantly.



Blow up mission specific trucks or installations with TNT and you get a satisfying cut scene and kudos from the boys back at base. Very satisfying.

While these consist of very typical deathmatch and capture the flag variants it's the fact you can win new soldiers or lose men to another player that makes them so addictive.

Bosses and backtracks

The single-player plot unfurls at a rapid pace keeping interest high, and boss battles are noticeably less painstaking than in previous MGS titles. While you do need to go back and visit locations more than once (to recruit soldiers or steal items) it never feels like a chore, however, more variety in terms of look and pacing would have made replaying the game on a harder skill setting that

bit more enticing.

And for all Portable Ops' qualities there's another criticism that can't be avoided: the controls are overly fiddly. There are simply too many commands mapped to the PSP's more limited control scheme (compared to the DualShock's twin analogue layout) and crucially, the first-person aiming via the analogue nub is clumsy and awkward. It's something you learn to live with but never quite forgive.

Portable Ops remains a uniquely entertaining proposition on PSP, brimming with action, stealth and a fox-like cleverness. Its deep squad management may not appeal to everyone but for those who want a bit of brains with their brawn, this is an incredibly captivating package. ●

Mark Walbank



"The single-player plot unfurls at a rapid pace keeping interest high"

HGZine Verdict

A solidly seductive Snake adventure, well realised for handheld.

PSP

- Deep squad management
- Ace bosses
- Fiddly controls

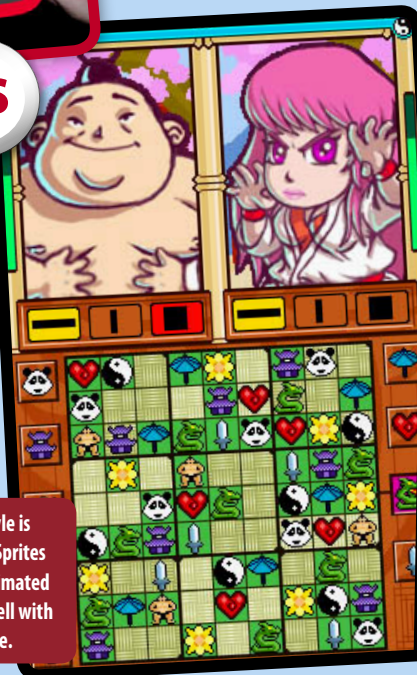
9

DS



Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Zoonami
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.zendokugame.com
OUT NOW

The graphical style is bold and brash. Sprites are colorfully animated and work very well with the game's theme.



The Zen mode allows you to attempt each increasingly tough micro-game within a strict time limit.

"The time is ripe for an undead uprising The time is ripe for an undead uprising"

The dialogue is a knowing pastiche of Japanese fighting games and boasts hit and miss humour.



Zendoku

Carol Vorderman goes Bruce Lee as Sudoku gets angry.

Brawny alpha males wanting to assert their athletic dominance have always been well catered for by videogames. Likewise, those players of a more logical persuasion have had Tetris, Puzzle Bobble and Lumines to test IQ and reflexes in competitive play. But not since Super Puzzle Fighter has a game like Zendoku brought together the traditionally chalk and cheesy disciplines of head-to-head pixel combat and speed puzzling.

Viewed ungenerously, Zendoku is simply Sudoku using symbols instead

of numbers all overlaid with a tongue-in-cheek martial arts theme. In reality it's a stuffed and compelling package offering a fully-featured infinite Sudoku creator as well as its main feature: an intelligent reworking of the Sudoku formula perfectly suited to high-speed competitive play.

For the benefit of anybody who hasn't read a newspaper in the last three years, the rules of Sudoku are disarmingly simple in synopsis. You play on a nine by nine square grid – which is internally divided into three by three

boxes. The aim of the game is to fill every row, column and box with one of each number from one to nine – making sure there are no repeats – using logic only (never guesswork). Zendoku changes the numbers for cute little symbols but, essentially, works in exactly the same way.

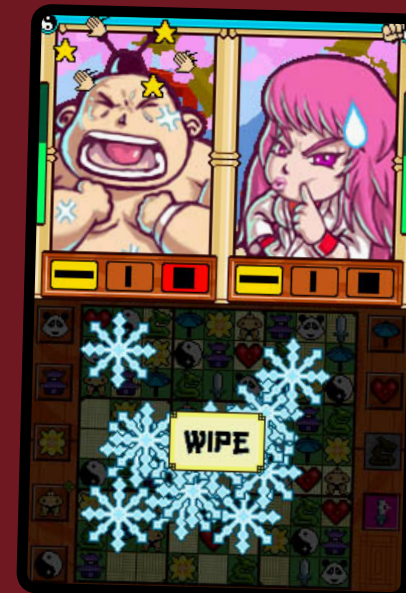
Boxing clever

You're given eight characters to choose between (four weapon-wielding fighters and four hand to hand) and then must work your way through a series of stages, facing off against opponents to complete your grid first. As you solve puzzles, you journey from novice to Doshu.

STYLUS MOVES

Fighting with Micro-games

Attacks in the game are represented by a series of micro-games of varying styles and degrees of difficulty all of which use different DS features. For example you might need to blow out three candles (by blowing onto the DS microphone) or block little graphical recreations of your opponents' attacks with the stylus. Daft but fun.



Completing a column, row or 3x3 box on the grid launches an attack upon the opponent (and vice-versa) in the form of a Wario Ware-style microgame which must be successfully completed before the recipient can continue filling in the grid. This lends the game a real sense of urgency which, while hardly reinventing the puzzle-based wheel, quickly becomes enjoyably addictive. ●

Simon Parkin



HGZine
Verdict

An ingenious re-skinning of Sudoku. Works well as a multiplayer race-off

DS

- Vibrant art style
- Lots of game modes
- Battles could be tougher

7

PCGZine

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Quake Wars: Enemy Territory

Hands-on with the game you want to play

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ZOOM IN ZOOM OUT TOGGLE F

PSP

Championship Manager 2007

Slip into a sheepskin coat and moccasin shoes as you manage the beautiful game from the palm of your hand.

You have to feel a little sorry for the developer who decides to make a football management videogame these days. You start by building a deep and wide tactical playground filled with complex managerial mechanics to allow players to infinitely customise their career through transfers, signings, formations, team interactions and in-game strategy. Then, once the framework is fixed, you

gather the most up-to-the-minute official league and player information to populate your game with.

Engine trouble

Finally, when most people would be ready to retire, it's time to think about y'know, how best to show what happens during the actual matches: the football, if you will. It's this last bit that developer Gusto Games was criticised for in its last Championship Manager game on the PSP. While the game was meticulously thorough in its information and tactics, it presented a pretty shoddy match engine – more pinball than football. This kind of undermined the depth and brilliance of the rest of the package spoiling it for many. So it's pleasing to see that this key area of the game has been favourably overhauled for this latest iteration of the legendary series.

Indeed, while this game introduces a few fresh features (a new look and

Your backroom staff provide plenty of support – and if they don't, sack 'em...

control system, a multiplayer battle mode, a set-piece editor and the ability to hire an assistant manager) in the main this is a game that polishes the dull bits of its predecessor. Team talks have been greatly expanded and player morale now plays a key element. New match-day team talks give you the opportunity to influence the game's events. In-game tactics are now much deeper allowing you to pinpoint weak or inexperienced opponents.

Additionally, teams from the English North or South Divisions have been added allowing talented would-be managers to try their hand at taking a lowly team to the top. It's an extremely successful update to a series rapidly growing in fans and esteem. If you let it, Champ Man 2007 will certainly fill your footie life when the real season draws to its close. ●

Simon Parkin

Match speed and instant replays are customisable as you watch and learn.

The tactics screen is the mid-match engine room of your tactical genius.

HGZine Verdict Deal with every element of real-life football management.

PSP

- Watch players react to press
- Comprehensive data
- Overwhelmingly deep

8

BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU

Data capture your way to victory!

A recent addition to real world of managers is the ability to data-capture the movement of players during a match and breakdown the game's successes and failures into individual components. The game nods towards this technology by providing top-down views of every pass, tackle and shot made by each team to help you work out where your strengths and weaknesses lie and act accordingly in managing your players' training.

PSP



Publisher: EA
Developer: Criterion/
Point of View
Heritage: Burnout series,
Black series
Link: www.criteriongames.com/
OUT NOW

Burnout Dominator

The crash-'em-up legend goes back to its roots to re-discover the joys of driving.

EA gets all of the annoying things about Burnout Dominator out of the way at the start. The list of grievances is limited to the lengthy tutorial cut-scene that you can't skip and the intrusive EA Trax pop-ups that tell you what (usually baleful) piece of music is currently blaring. Once they're out of the way, it's just pure speed and mental driving.

The game is fairly stripped down by comparison with the last couple of Burnout titles: it gets rid of the crash mode (which was, frankly, boring anyway), and marks the return of the burnout (which, curiously, hasn't appeared in a Burnout game since the second one). That means the emphasis is now on narrowly avoiding pile-ups rather than ploughing into oncoming traffic to create them. You can still put a

bit of aftertouch on your car after you crash, and you'll still be rewarded for taking out your rivals, but this game marks a return to the manic racing of the early games in the series.

Speed demon

Driving dangerously rewards you with burnouts, which increase your speed. Driving dangerously while using a burnout rewards you with another burnout, allowing you to chain them together for high scores and an insane sense of speed. It's a perfect balance of risk and reward, and it's undiluted by the ability to ram your opponents off the road to open up shortcuts. And

"The greatest sensation of momentum you're going to get on the PSP"

while it's not quite a technical tour de force, Dominator is probably home to the greatest sensation of momentum you're going to get on the PSP, and the environments are undeniably attractive (like the cherry blossom shortcut in Bushido Peak, for example). The only minor complaint is that multiplayer modes are limited to ad-hoc, which wouldn't be quite so bad if the game wasn't so much fun. ●

Dave McCarthy

Scan that scenery for shortcuts!



PODIUM FINISH

Points win prizes...

You can win trophies by performing various tasks over the course of the game. These vary from 'perform your first burnout' or 'win race after three crashes' to the rather more challenging 'get 500 total takedowns' or '10x burnout boost chain'. If you perform enough of them, you'll win a trophy. Simple but nicely reminiscent of the Xbox 360 Achievement points.



The fantastic new Road Rage mode requires you to take out rivals. Eat this!



There are seven classes of car from Classic to the ultimate Dominator.



HGZine
Verdict

One of the best handheld driving games available. A dominant force.

PSP

- 👍 The return of the burnout
- 👍 The fastest racing on PSP
- 👎 Multiplayer's only ad-hoc

8

DS

Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
Heritage: The Final Fantasy series. Duh.
Link: <http://na.square-enix.com/chocobotales>
ETA: May 25

It can talk the talk, but can it 'warrrrk!' the walk?

Alarm bells ringing? Let's look at what we've got here: a mascot-led spin-off from a big franchise that trades on its big brother's name in order to boost popularity. If you're wary, well, that's pretty understandable. Thankfully, it's also totally unfounded. Formerly trusty steeds to countless

sullen Final Fantasy heroes but now stars of their own primary coloured adventure, Chocobo Tales may be one of the most visually impressive (and oh-my-god cute) games we've seen on the DS. But its light, carefree tone shines far beyond the visuals, lending a charming, unassuming air to both the game's story and dialogue.

Card combat

Conflict takes the form of fast-paced pyrotechnic card duelling with a wide range of cards and effects offering significant room for strategic deck construction. These cards are earned through picture-book based mini-games and countless micro-games, each of which offers multiple tiers of difficulty and rewards appropriately powerful cards.

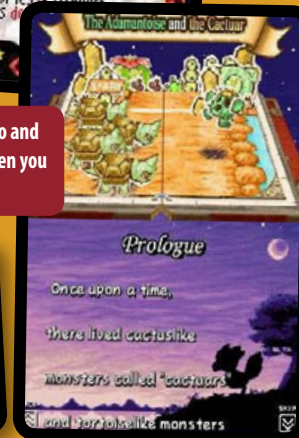
The two elements work in perfect harmony, leaving the player with a constant stream of things to do: should a particular battle prove too hard, you can revisit an old mini-game and improve your performance to obtain more powerful cards. In fact, it's

The cards feature a range of extremely familiar Final Fantasy monsters and summons.



The card battles have a really wonderful 'pop-up book' aesthetic.

Each storybook contains an intro and three endings, which unlock when you complete mini-games.



"May be one of the most visually impressive games we've seen on DS"

HGZine Verdict *An incredibly endearing DS game. Casts a spell on all who play.*

DS

- Visually stunning
- Open to all
- A touch too hard at points

9

FINAL FANTASY FOIBLES

The tale behind the Tales...

When Kuroma the black mage accidentally lets loose the book-bound demon Bebbus, it sucks up all of the inhabitants of Chocobo Farm and traps them in picture books. Our hero's aim is to simultaneously save the trapped Chocobo and stop Bebbus' resurrection by finding the four elemental crystals.



DS

Diner Dash

Does playing as Tony Hawks or Solid Snake make you weary? Try a change of pace on the minimum wage.

Most of us love videogames because they allow us to be people or do things that we'd never normally get the chance to in reality. Be it tearing around Tokyo backstreets in a Nissan Skyline, scoring the winning goal in the World Cup or rescuing Princess Peach from an angry, spiked turtle, videogames are a glorious escape from the mundane.

Strange, then, how utterly

compulsive Diner Dash is – a game that casts you as a humble waitress serving the grumpy and ungrateful customers that visit an unremarkable restaurant.

Something's cooking

Following its theme, Diner Dash is a simple game with few rules and uncomplicated visuals. You control heroine Flo, using the DS stylus to direct her around the restaurant performing some basic waitressing tasks over a day's shift. Essentially the game can be broken down into these tasks: seat a customer, take their order, deliver their food, grab their money, clean their table. As customers arrive at different times you'll be needing to manage this service flow across different tables and therein the game's

TIPS AND RECEIPTS

Working the room, combo-style

Completing any two like actions in sequence (e.g. taking two orders before delivering the slips to the chef or cleaning two plates at once) grants a combo multiplier. Likewise customers are given particular colours – as are the seats in your restaurant. Match a customer's colour to a seat's colour and you earn bonus points – essential for getting those expert scores.

"You're cast as Flo, a humble waitress serving grumpy customers"

challenge and appeal is built.

Initially you'll start out with a small restaurant, a handful of tables and a trickle of customers. But as news spreads of your outstanding service the levels grow in complexity and soon you'll also be serving coffee and cola, bringing out high chairs for small children and cleaning up spills.

This might all become a little dull were it not underpinned by a deep scoring system which urges you to waitress intelligently in order to create combos (see Tips and Receipts). To pass a level you'll need to meet the minimum score requirement for that day's service so cleverly managing your duties is a must.

Other than the main career mode (which sees Flo working through five themed restaurants' worth of levels) there's an endless shift mode and a brilliant two-player wireless competitive mode to round out this simple but extremely compulsive game. ●

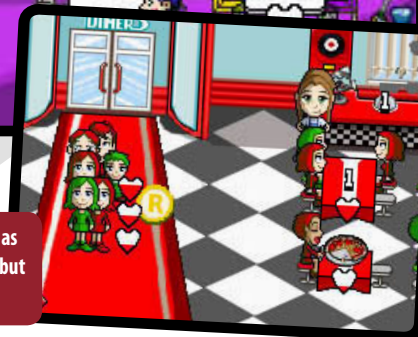
Simon Parkin



Each restaurant has its own distinctive theme and the items can be customised as you progress.



Diner Dash first appeared as a downloadable PC game but feels great to play on DS.



HGZine
Verdict

Who'd have thought that taking orders could be so much fun?

DS



Fast and furious gameplay



Micro-management tactics



Cutesy art style

8



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MOBILE REVIEWS

All the latest from the world of mobile phone gaming



Metal Slug 3

Publisher: I-play

Another welcome slab of scrolling blast-'em-up action, re-imagined from the classic SNK arcade series. Once again, we get the relentless swarms of enemy troops, the varied weapons and moments of knockabout background humour. However, the pace isn't quite there and the slight awkwardness of the controls is in stark contrast to the fluid feel of the originals. Old fans should still take a slug, though.

- Sharp 2D design
- Nice range of weapons
- Lacks pace

Metal sluggish

7

Office Wars

Publisher: Vivendi

You're a new employee at Spicy Squid Inc and via a series of daft missions must destroy the careers of your promotion rivals. The action is based around a selection of simple mini-games including scissor-paper-stones fights and conversations that you 'win' by hitting the fire button at the right time. The office is tiny, but the isometric visuals are rife with comic detail. It's amiable stuff, but may only last as long as the average workplace fling.



- Fun visual style
- Reasonably compelling plot
- Short and simple

Casual employment

7



Rollercoaster Rush 3D

Publisher: Digital Chocolate

The latest casual treat from Digital Chocolate has you controlling the speed on a series of heart-stopping rollercoaster rides. Accelerate to give the punters a thrill, but hit the brakes at the right moments to stop the carriages plummeting off the tracks. Incredibly simple, but thanks to the varied track designs and nice use of 3D visuals, hugely compelling. There are 30 rides to conquer and there's bags of replay value as you go back to improve your scores on each looping, swerving course. A hot-swapping multiplayer mode is the icing on the cake.

- Intuitive design
- Great use of basic 3D visuals
- Lots of replay value

More ups than downs

8

R-Type

Publisher: Elite

Utilising the original source code, UK developer Gyrox has perfectly re-created Irem's 1987 shoot-'em-up legend, respecting every nuance, from the imaginative biomechanical levels to the tight enemy attack patterns and nightmarish end-of-level bosses. The scrolling is smooth, even when the screen fills with whirling space craft, while all the weapon pick-ups are here. An autofire function means you don't have to pound the keypad (hitting '5' charges up for a more intense blast). Also, the game saves between each level so you can unlock this masterpiece at your own pace. If you're into retro blasters, wipe Space Invaders and replace it with this. Now.



- Highly accurate conversion
- Sensible mobile phone features
- Satisfyingly tough

Just 'R-Type' of retro game

8



RECOMMENDED
Four mobile games you must own

The Incredible Machine (Vivendi)

Compelling re-make of the classic machine-building puzzler.

R-Type (Elite)

The hardcore shooter lives again with a fine mobile conversion.

Project Gotham Racing (Glu)

Breathtakingly good version of a triumphant Xbox racer.

NOM (Living Mobile)

Probably the most innovative mobile game ever made.



SCX

Publisher: Lemon Quest

Due to licensing restrictions this fun slot car racing sim can't be called Scalextric in the UK – but that's just what it is. Controls are authentic – keep your fire button pressed to accelerate, hit a number key to swap lanes or enter the pit. The isometric graphics are cute, the circuits perfectly resembling your own childhood set-ups. There's even some pit strategy involved – before each race you choose to start with a full, half-full or near-empty fuel tank – the less gas, the more speed, but the greater risk of running out of juice mid-race. Add in the clever, easy to use track editor and you have an essential purchase for slot car fans of all ages.

- Evocative 2D visuals
- Tense racing
- Multiplayer would be nice

Slots of fun

8

In defence

of PSP

In this PSP-packed issue we stand up for the oft beleaguered console.

The DS continues to outsell the PSP all over the world. In Japan, for example, it had sold about five times as many units as PSP by the end of last year. That's because the DS has got more games, it's got better games, and it's got games that reach out to new audiences. Right? Well, actually, no. In the interests of scientific objectivity, I can now offer definitive proof that the PSP has precisely as many good games as the Nintendo DS.

You see, I am an indiscriminate collector and player of games. I'll buy anything that I think might be half-decent, even if I don't have the money. And it turns out that at this moment in time, I have precisely the same number of games for my PSP as I do for my DS. Which is something that I'd never have expected – certainly not in the fallow

period following the launch of the PSP. In fact, after losing a good few months to Lumines, I didn't play with my PSP for about a year after it launched in Japan. And yet here I am now, with exactly as many PSP games as DS games. I have no idea how it happened.

Compare and contrast

It's not like the games on the PSP are any worse, or any less groundbreaking than their DS counterparts. Sure, the DS has got a superb mix of all time classics and enjoyable innovation: Advance Wars, Animal Crossing, Brain Training, Nintendogs, Mario Kart, Phoenix Wright. But look at the stuff that's out there on PSP: some of the most inventive puzzle games on any platform in the shape of Every Extend

Extra, Exit and Gunpey-R. Superb turn-based strategy like Metal Gear Ac'd and Field Commander. Innovative esoterica like LocoRoco and Talkman.

It's even got enough Sudoku and brain training puzzles to match the likes of Picross and Slitherlink on the DS, and that's before you get to third-person action with the likes of GTA. So that, in my mind, is scientific evidence that flies in the face of conventional wisdom to prove that the PSP has precisely as many good games as the Nintendo DS. But it's still not selling as well as the DS. Which suggests that the problem with the PSP is not with the quality or availability of its

games, but with the console's price and public perception. That's the scale of Sony's problem. To judge by the recent price-cut, the company knows it. Now it's time to start fixing the public perception. I've done my bit. ●

Dave McCarthy

Gunpey: puzzling
brilliance on PSP.



Talkman: learn to
speak foreign!



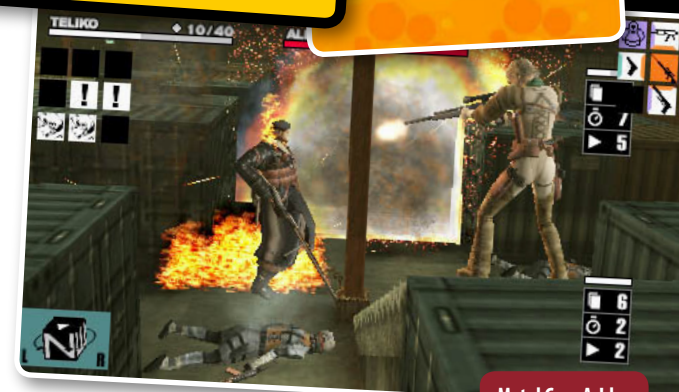
Field Commander:
for thinking men.



LocoRoco: so cute
it actually hurts.



**"PSP has precisely as
many good games as
the Nintendo DS"**



Metal Gear Ac'd:
superb stuff...



David McCarthy has co-authored two books about videogames and worked at Edge magazine, Rockstar Games, and US Investment Bank Salomon Smith Barney. Before that he says he studied medieval haircuts.

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